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British Campaign for the Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia

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Indonesia responds angrily to European Parliament Resolutions

Indonesia responded very angrily to two resolutions adopted on 13 June by the European Parliament condemning the execution of Mohammad Munir in May 1985, and calling for other executions of PKI prisoners to be cancelled. This reaction reflects a new sensitivity in Jakarta to foreign criticism of its human rights violations which has been noticeable in the last six months or so, though the response to the European Parliament has far exceeded anything hitherto. There are probably several reasons for this:

1. One of the resolutions hit the regime at its most vulnerable point, namely its own genesis: the resolution declared that the death sentences had been imposed against the five PKI leaders "because of their political opposition to the military regime which came to power in Indonesia in 1965 by means of a violent coup". This totally correct statement turns the regime's version of the 1965 events on its head and is probably at the heart of Jakarta's apoplexy.

2. It so happens that the resolutions were passed a few weeks before an Indonesian parliamentary delegation left for Luxemburg for discussions with the European Parliament (EP) as part of regular annual meetings held with ASEAN parliamentarians (in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation, AIPO). Past meetings have gone virtually unreported, but this time the occasion suddenly became an event of major national importance.

3. The resolutions followed a very strong protest campaign against Munir's execution, particularly in Holland, which undoubtedly took Jakarta by surprise because of its intensity and political breadth.

4. The resolutions coincided with the publication of the European Parliament's draft Annual Report on Human Rights Violations worldwide which includes a paragraph on Indonesia which reads as follows:

> Is gravely concerned about...
> The policies of repression and terror pursued by the Indonesian authorities in Irian Jaya and East Timor, including massacres by military forces, summary executions, indiscriminate arrest, torture, deaths in detention and abductions; the Indonesian Government has continued to exert pressure on Papua New Guinea for the return of refugees who have fled from Irian Jaya; in addition to the imprisonment of large numbers of alleged secessionists, a number of political prisoners arrested after the coup of 1965 still face the death penalty.

Before the Indonesian delegation left Jakarta, the DPR chairman, General Amir Machmud, and his deputy, General Kharis Suhud, who led the delegation to Luxemburg, were instructed by Suharto to do everything possible to have the resolutions withdrawn and the paragraph on Indonesia removed from the Human Rights Report draft. As soon as the two generals made this public, the Indonesian press devoted daily front-page coverage to statements by generals, government ministers, politicians and the puppet governors of West Papua and Irian Jaya, accusing the EP of gross interference, of falling under communist influence, and so on.

8a Treport Street, London SW18 2BP Tel.: 01-874 3262/9684

An emergency meeting of Indonesian ambassadors in EEC countries was convened in Vienna and told by the Kharis Suhud delegation to counter criticism more effectively. (Apparently, some of these ambassadors had suggested that the parliamentary delegation should cancel its visit to Luxemburg, fearing that it could bring only bad publicity for Indonesia; this was a position completely out of step with Jakarta's current attitude towards international condemnation of its human rights record.)

Events in Luxemburg

There was, of course, no question of the already adopted resolution being withdrawn. The EP's contact group for dialogue with ASEAN parliamentarians had a heated discussion with the Indonesians, and the joint statement issued afterwards upheld the EP's condemnation of the execution.

It so happens that in the week of the dialogue, the EP decided to postpone discussion on and adoption of the Human Rights Report until November this year because so many amendments had been submitted. This decision was quite unrelated to the Indonesian visit, yet the delegation used this to claim that they had scored a great victory, depicting the postponement as being over the draft's position on Indonesia (an 8-line paragraph in a document 47 pages long) and, by mixing the two things up, implying that what had been postponed was the (already-adopted!) resolution.

Following the delegation's 'triumphal' return ("Vini, vidi, vici", they said), the press showed an almost obsessional interest in the European Parliament affair giving it even more coverage than before the delegation departed. The paper we monitor, Sinar Harapan, had sent a journalist to Luxemburg specially to cover the event; political analysts were interviewed to shed light on the EP, its procedures, the philosophy of its human rights concerns which neglect the noble, national philosophy of the Indonesian state, and many other aspects of the affair. The Dutch MEP, Mrs Ien van den Heuvel, who drafted the Human Rights report for the European Parliament's Human Rights Sub-Committee, was interviewed at length and then castigated in a long editorial for stubbornly sticking to her views.

In all the hullabaloo, an interview of an Indonesian historian doing doctoral studies at Sorbonne (the son of an Army general ousted from the general staff after Suharto took power) said that the 1965 affair is far more complex than depicted in Indonesia. He spoke about "Factor X" which may not be known until still confidential documents in the West are made public under the 30-year secrecy rule, ie hinting at western complicity. He also said no event of this nature could be left to the interpretation of one historian (a dig at the Army's official, recently-deceased historian, Nugroho Notosusanto). The European Parliament affair has thus also raised, in the Indonesian press, the question of what really happened in 1965, though the regime is hardly likely to view such a development lightly.

Conclusions

This affair shows the regime in a very defensive mood and proves that criticism abroad hurts it profoundly.

The European Parliament has emerged as an important arena for pressing the case against Indonesia. This could well increase when

Portuguese parliamentarians take their seats in the Parliament.

The European Parliament is developing a comprehensive human rights policy and has evolved procedures for the organisation of visits to other countries, attending political trials and holding public hearings on human rights abuse. (A public hearing will be held this year on Iran.)

The Parliament's Draft Annual Report on Human Rights is available from EP offices in EEC capitals, Document A2-61/85/1, 14 June 1985. The Annual Report is compiled from human rights resolutions adopted by the Parliament in the previous year. The only Indonesia-related resolutions in the period covered by the Report were two on West Papuan refugees. We need to devote more attention to promoting resolutions in the European Parliament.

We need to lobby MEPs in the EEC countries, giving information on all the issues already raised and urging them to defend the draft Human Rights Report paragraph on Indonesia, in the Political Affairs Committee, in its Human Rights Sub-Committee, and at the plenary session in November. (We dont know whether any of the amendments tabled relate to the paragraph on Indonesia.) In particular, contact should be made with the MEPs who sit on the Human Rights Subcommittee.

We should make enquiries about the possibility of a European Parliament hearing on some Indonesia-related issue, possibly East Timor. TAPOL intends to investigate the procedures and requirements for such a hearing.

Carmel Budiardjo